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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/03/2033
TAGS: [ETTC](#) [MASS](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [IR](#) [RS](#) [GM](#)
SUBJECT: SEEKING GERMAN SUPPORT ON ENDING RUSSIAN ARMS
SALES TO IRAN AND SYRIA

REF: STATE 137954

Classified By: EUR/PRA Director Anita Friedt,
Reasons 1.4 (b), (c), and (d)

11. (U) This is an action request, please see paragraph 5.

SUMMARY

12. (C) U.S. officials have provided briefings to countries on Russian arms sales of concern and asked appropriate officials to raise these sales with Russian officials. German Chancellor Merkel is meeting with Russian President Medvedev on June 5; we would like to encourage her to raise the issue of Russian arms sales to Iran and Syria with Medvedev.

BACKGROUND

13. (C) U.S. officials regularly have expressed to Russia our concerns regarding problematic Russian arms transfers (especially to Iran and Syria) and evidence of retransfers of these arms, including to non-state actors. Major U.S. demarches to Russia in March, August, and September 2007 have failed to spur a meaningful Russian response. Regardless of whether the evidence presented is based on intelligence gathered by the United States, by friendly countries, or derived from media reporting, Russian officials generally have pressed for additional evidence, dismissed USG arguments that Russian arms transfers to Iran and Syria pose a threat to regional stability or to coalition forces in Iraq, rejected the legitimacy of U.S. arms transfer-related sanctions, and/or argued that Russia has effective export control laws and fulfills its "international obligations" on arms transfers (including with respect to UNSCRS 1737 and 1747). In response to media reporting on the use of Russian RPG-29s against U.S. Forces in Iraq, they have suggested (implausibly) that another former Soviet country could be the source of these weapons.

14. (S) Both Iran and Syria have demonstrated that they are not reliable end-users. There is a constant risk that small arms and large weapon systems transferred to either country will be retransferred to terrorist groups. Overall, the USG has serious concerns about providing Iran or Syria with sophisticated weaponry. Accordingly, over the past two years the USG has raised with Russia our strong concerns about Russian arm sales to Iran of advanced air surveillance radar systems, laser-guided artillery shells, advanced anti-tank and air defense weapons, shoulder-fired rocket launchers and significant upgrades to combat aircraft. U.S. officials also have raised concerns with Russian arm sales to Syria, such as advanced air-to-surface missile systems, electronic warfare-associated equipment, ammunition production facilities, production equipment for machine guns, and overhauls/upgrades of aircraft. The information included in the U.S. non-paper on Russian arms transfers (paragraph 7) presents some examples of problematic Russian arms transfers and retransfers.

ACTION REQUEST

15. (S) Department requests that Embassy share this information with appropriate senior-level host government officials, urging that Germany use this information in making its own approaches to senior Russian officials including during Russian President Medvedev's meetings in Berlin this week, regarding arms transfers and retransfers that pose a threat to coalition forces in Iraq.

OBJECTIVES

16. (C) Embassy should pursue the following objectives with host government officials:

- Seek German cooperation in preventing Russian arms transfers and re-transfers to Iran, Syria, and other countries of concern.
- Point out previously-raised transfer and retransfer cases involving Iran and Syria.
- Highlight in particular the use of RPG-29s against U.S. and coalition forces in Iraq.
- Highlight evidence shown in the U.S. non-paper on Russian arms transfers (paragraph 7) regarding the serious threat Iranian and Syrian re-transfers pose.
- Note our readiness to investigate credible evidence of retransfers of U.S. arms to non-state actors. For example, in response to Russian officials who claimed that military equipment of U.S.-origin had been identified as in Hizballah's possession, we conducted a prompt investigation. The investigation concluded that the equipment was transferred to Iran prior to the 1979 Revolution when Iran was a major recipient of U.S.-origin weapons. Hizballah evidently received these weapons from Iran, either directly or, perhaps, via a combination of illegitimate and legitimate transactions in Lebanon.

----- NONPAPER ON ARMS SALES TO IRAN AND SYRIA -----

17. (S/REL GERMANY) The following is a nonpaper for the Mission to provide to appropriate host government officials:

SECRET/REL GERMANY

NONPAPER ON ARM SALES TO IRAN AND SYRIA

- We have raised with Russia over the past two years our grave concerns about its sales to Iran of advanced air surveillance radar systems; laser-guided artillery shells; advanced anti-tank and air defense weapons; a Kornet-E anti-tank guided missile (ATGM) training system, launchers and missiles; RPG-7 rocket launchers; significant upgrades to MiG-29 and Su-24 combat aircraft; and the TOR-M1 and SA-20 GARGOYLE air defense systems.
- We have also raised with Russia our grave concerns about sales of equipment to Syria, such as advanced air-to-surface weaponry; modern surface-to-air missile systems; electronic warfare-associated equipment; ammunition production facilities; production equipment for machine guns; and the sale of combat aircraft and overhauls/upgrades of existing air force inventory. In the summer of 2006 we raised with Moscow the transfer of ATGMs and subsequent retransfers to Hizballah.
- Both Iran and Syria have demonstrated that they are not reliable end-users. There is a constant risk that any weapons transferred to either country will be re-transferred to terrorist groups.
- Iran has long supplied non-state actors, including terrorist groups such as Hizballah, with arms and other

military equipment. The terrorist applications of small arms and light weapons (SA/LW) are obvious, but Iran has also supplied terrorists with larger weapons systems that threaten regional security and stability.

-- Iranian-origin 240mm rockets have been used by Iraqi insurgents to attack US and Coalition forces and facilities. Iranian-origin weapons have also been recovered from Taliban caches in Afghanistan.

-- Hizballah has used Iranian-supplied unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to conduct operations against Israel.

-- Iran has continued to supply rockets and other weapons to Hizballah since 2006 in violation of UNSCR 1701. The government of Turkey, for example, notified the UN of an incident that occurred in May 2007 in which a train originating in Iran derailed inside Turkey, revealing an illicit cargo of arms intended for Syria and probably onward shipment to Hizballah.

-- Iran has re-transferred to terrorist groups both Iranian-produced weapons and those imported from other suppliers. Iran also has a long history of producing copies of foreign weapons, often without licenses or under expired licenses. We presented evidence at the Wassenaar Arrangement meetings in October 2006 that Iranian copies of foreign SA/LW have been recovered from terrorist and insurgent stockpiles.

--We also raised with Russia in December 2006 information that the Iranian Towsan-1 anti-tank guided missile, a version of the Russian Konkurs-M ATGM assembled domestically by Iran, was used by Hizballah against Israeli tanks in July 2006.

-- These incidents demonstrate that weapons supplied to Iran do not stay in Iran. Even large, advanced systems are at risk of being transferred to terrorists and non-state actors. Given Iran's record of performance, Iranian assurances to supplier governments that Iran will not retransfer the weapons it buys are not credible; it is for this reason that UNSCR 1747 called for vigilance and restraint in exporting to Iran conventional arms.

-- Syria, too, has long supplied weapons to terrorist organizations. In 2006, we discussed with Russia Hizballah's use of advanced Russian ATGMs during the 2006 conflict in Lebanon. They told us that these were weapons that Moscow had previously sold to the Syrian government and which had been diverted to Hizballah. As in the case of Iran, we believe that any assurances one might receive from Syria that such weapons will not be diverted are not credible. We remain extremely concerned that these or any additional weapons Russia or others might supply to Syria, including ATGMs or other SA/LW, will in fact be retransferred to Hizballah or other terrorist groups.

-- For example, we are aware that Syria received large quantities of RPG-29 rocket-propelled grenade launchers from Russia in 1999-2000. Press reports indicate that Israel recovered RPG-29s during armed clashes with Hizballah in November 2005 and again in May 2006--a few short years after the RPGs were first transferred to Syria.

-- In August 2006, US forces began to encounter the RPG-29 in Iraq. Since that time, RPG-29s have been used in at least three attacks on US armored vehicles in Iraq.

--We called on Russia to investigate the circumstances that led to the Syrian retransfer of the RPG-29s and to take corrective action.

END NON-PAPER

Reporting Requirement and POC

18. (U) Please report delivery of the demarche and any

immediate response by June 6.

19. (U) Department point of contact is Margaret T. Mitchell,
(202) 647-2433, mitchellmt2@state.sgov.gov. Please slug all
replies to ISN and EUR. Department thanks Post for its
assistance.

RICE